

**Executive Committee for Highway Safety  
Lane Departure Working Group  
Meeting Minutes – Mtg. #6  
March 30, 2005**

**Location:**

UNC Highway Safety Research Center @ 10:00 a.m.

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

Steve Varnedoe	Doug Robertson	Rob Foss	Sgt. Tim Hartsell
Leigh Gill	Ruben Moore	Charlie Zegeer	Bucky Galloway
Brad Hibbs	Cliff Braam		

**Scribe:**

Cliff Braam

**Minutes:**

- The meeting began at approximately 10:05 a.m.
- Steve welcomed everyone and introductions were made for the benefit of the guests.

**Task I – Review of Driver’s Education in N.C.**

**Questions of DPI**

Michele Wallen of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) was invited to attend the meeting, but was unable to do so due to conflicts on her schedule. Michele heads up the driver’s education program within DPI and offered to answer any questions that the group forwarded to her in preparation for the meeting. A list of questions from the group members was compiled and sent to Michele. The questions and her responses are included at the end of the minutes.

**Rob Foss – Overview of Driver’s Ed Program**

Rob gave the group a thorough overview of the young drivers, N.C.’s Graduated Driver’s License (GDL) program and driver’s education. Listed below are some of the more pertinent points made.

- ◆ The two most dangerous situations for young drivers to be in are 1) night time driving and 2) driving with other teen age passengers.
- ◆ N.C.’s GDL is probably one of the best in the country due to the way it is structured. For more information on the GDL, please visit HSRC’s web site at:  
[http://www.hsrc.unc.edu/pubinfo/grad\\_main.htm](http://www.hsrc.unc.edu/pubinfo/grad_main.htm).
- ◆ N.C.’s GDL is structured so that it accounts for these two dangerous situations for young drivers. In Step 1, the driver must drive only with an adult for a period of 1 year. IF the driver completes one year of violation free driving, they graduate to Step 2 where they are allowed to drive unsupervised, but not under the two most dangerous conditions. That is, they can only have one passenger in the vehicle under the age of 21 and can only drive

during the hours of 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. if they are unsupervised. If the driver successfully completes six months of violation free driving, thus demonstrating responsibility, then they graduate to Step 3 – Full Provisional license.

- ◆ GDL has been very effective in N.C. in reducing the number of crashes that 16 year olds are involved in (see graph at end of minutes). GDL took effect in December 1997, and the crashes for 16 year olds decreased by 34%, while crashes for 17 year olds decreased by 19%.
- ◆ The passenger restriction was applied to the GDL in December 2002 and crashes decreased another 4.5% which is significant since passenger restrictions only apply to about 11% of potential trips.
- ◆ One puzzling bit of information is that the data does not support that the GDL process has any type of long term effect once a driver exits the GDL period. the 16-17 year olds that have been protected under the GDL for two years, exhibit no positive effect on the number of crashes they are involved in as 18-19 year olds.
- ◆ There are numerous studies that have been done analyzing the effect of driver's Ed and none of them show that such programs have any net effect on reducing the number of crashes, crash rates or crash risk.
- ◆ We should not expect driver's Ed to have this sort of impact, but rather expect the program to teach principals of safe driving and how to drive to the students.
- ◆ Driver's Ed, should not be held to a standard that is higher than what is expected of other programs.
- ◆ It is one thing to teach a subject to someone, but yet quite another to make them learn/absorb the information, much less have them translate this into actions/use.
- ◆ There are may benefits to Driver's Ed and even if recommendations were made to utilize the funds currently spent on Driver's Ed for other programs, it is highly unlikely that these monies would make it to their intended targets as they would likely get split up and diverted to other areas.

## **Task II – Advanced Driving School**

Next Leigh Gill gave an overview of the advanced driving school that he teaches.

The training occurs at Farmington Motorsports Park and Piedmont Dragway, two drag racing facilities located in the general triad area. There is an initial class room session that all students attend where the instructor covers each section the student will train on. After the classroom, the instructor and students do a familiarization tour of the entire course so the students have an understanding of the actual course. Also, as each student trains on each section they are given the opportunity to allow the instructor to give them the first run for each section. There is always an instructor in the car with a single student in the car as the training is one-on-one. The morning training includes two fifteen to twenty minute turns in the car at each station for each student. There are a maximum of three students assigned to each car and a maximum of nine students will be taught each day. The students are expected to watch their team mates training so they can visualize their next turn in the car.

Training is done in three primary areas. One area includes Emergency Maneuvers at speed that simulates a typical high speed maneuver a driver would make while avoiding something in the road or while making an emergency lane change on the highway. This area continues into the

threshold braking area, which includes turning while braking. Training also includes how to Return to the Road after driving off onto the shoulder. The off road training reaches speeds of 60 mph. The third area of instruction is time/distance/speed training where the student traverses a slow speed slalom course at various set speeds.

For more information on Leigh's school, please see his web site at [www.ads-1st.com](http://www.ads-1st.com).

- The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 a.m.

Next Meeting: TBD

**Questions About Driver's Education**  
**Submitted to and Answered by Michele Wallen @ DPI**

**1. How many students take driver's Ed annually?**

*This number is kept only at the local level. Currently there is no State report that collects this data. It used to be kept at the State level but in 1991 when the program was taken out of the instructional school day the local districts became responsible for the data.*

**2. What is the total annual cost of the program to the state?**

*It changes from year to year based on enrollment and the figure that is allotted from the General Assembly however for the current school calendar year the total budget was \$31,929,945 and we had a 9<sup>th</sup> grade ADM of 130,333 which gives a per student allotment of \$245.55.*

**3. Does DPI or anyone else track the success and failure (particularly in regards to crashes and citations) of the various county driver's education programs across the state?**

*No*

**4. Who sets the curriculum and decides what is to be taught in class?**

*The local districts establish the content of the courses. Once DE was removed from the instructional school day the State Board of Education/DPI can no longer require a Standard Course of Study for driver education. There is a small amount of legislation which dictates what must be included as a part of the instruction but the actual standards and curriculum is designed at the local level.*

**5. Do you see a need to change the existing Driver's Ed program that is being provided in NC?**

*Without State standards this is difficult.*

**6. If so, what would be your recommendations?**

*Increased accountability for quality instruction.*

**7. Is there a process in place by which to monitor all of the individual entities teaching driver's Ed?**

*The districts are responsible for monitoring these instructors and if they have DPI licensure they must renew the license with renewal credits every five year.*

**8. In your opinion, how can we best address the high crash rates NC is seeing with its young drivers?**

*I think there are many factors outside of the control of schools as you know more young people have cars now, the speed limits are significantly higher now than 20 years ago, many young people are required to provide their own transportation to and from school, work, other events b/c of single parent families and other factors. I do think the graduated driver license legislation has helped and the limitation of the number of young people in the car for the level two drivers is a positive change. The driver education instruction required and funded by the State is 30 hours of classroom instruction and 6 hours of behind the wheel*

instruction - please keep that in mind as you process any needs for additions or changes to the driver education program. If more hours of instruction are needed the funding may need to change.

16

Crash Rate Ratio by Age vs. 25-54 Year-olds  
January 1991-September 2004

